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THE INNER LIFE OF AN INN

Being a TRUE STORY of an INN near Vassar College

By MARY SWAIN WAGNER



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near Vassar College

BY
MARY SWAIN WAGNER

SKETCHES BY M. S. W.

THE SELKIRK GRACE

Some hae meat, and canna eat,
And some wad eat that want it;
But we hae meat and we can eat,
And sae the Lord be thanket.
—*Robert Burns.*

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By MARY SWAIN WAGNER

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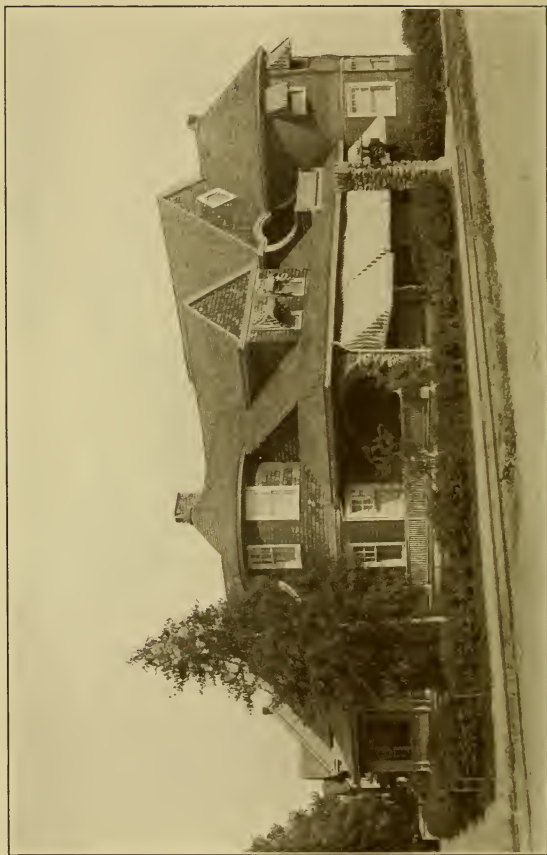
TO
MY SPIRIT MOTHER,
MARY SAVAGE WAGNER,
WHOSE MEMORY IS EVER DEAR, AND WHOSE
LOVING PRESENCE HAS ILLUMINED
MY DARKEST HOURS.

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THE WAGNER INN

I

THE LONG FELT WANT

"This Inn certainly fills a long felt want!" Emphasize l-o-n-g with a forty year drawl as if to indicate the duration of the want and you will have some idea of the gratitude expressed by the alumnae of Vassar College when they returned to visit their Alma Mater and discovered that an Inn had finally been opened for their accommodation. The longer they had been out of College and the more frequently they had returned, the more they realized the need of a hotel near the campus; or stated mathematically and concretely, the degree of appreciation felt by different individuals may be said to have varied inversely as the chronological order of graduation, and directly as the square of the number of visits since that time marking epoch.

It was in the fall of 1902, that my partner, Miss Anne Edith Lapham, and I began to practice the hotel business in the vicinity of Vassar College; perhaps I should say *mal*-practice for our efforts were quite on a par with the experiences of those who start on a career in law, medicine, or pedagogy. Even though our mistakes were not so damnably serious as hanging an innocent man, cutting out a perfectly healthy appendix, or muddling the brains of a promising child, there were times when the affairs at the

Inn took on the color of high tragedy. Salty ice-cream was sometimes served although it was not listed on the menu, or there was a dearth of sugar or baking-powder in the cake when there was no such lack in the market, or a steak burned to the consistency of shoe leather failed to satisfy an order for a "tenderloin—thick and rare."

It was not until we were fairly started that our most critical spectators began to see how desirable it was to have an inn near Vassar College; the better we did it, the more they realized the need, and the worse we did it, the more they realized the want. Some of our college friends had kindly and delicately hinted that a course in domestic science might be a helpful preparation for carrying on the work we were about to undertake. It is true that a more extensive knowledge of the culinary arts might have alleviated some of our troubles; a study of food values might have aided us in planning well balanced menus, had it been possible to balance calories for girls who order such combinations as strawberry-ice and Saratoga potatoes for breakfast.

Our most glaring faults were really the result of an intense preoccupation with problems that seemed at the time to have no bearing whatsoever upon the truly domestic side of the vocation we had chosen. What we needed most of all was not a course in domestic science, but a thorough knowledge of student psychology, high finance, and civil engineering. A course



APPRECIATION AS A VARIABLE QUANTITY (X)

in student psychology might have prepared us to meet the peculiar appetites and expectations of college girls; an apprenticeship on Wall Street might have taught us the art of paying bills with signed meal orders; an understanding of civil engineering might have revealed to us that water is just as essential to an inn stranded in the country as it is to a ship at sea. With the fortification of such knowledge our problems would have been met with less consternation, and we hope, with fewer calamities.

Our ignorance, however, proved to be our greatest asset, for had we anticipated the demands that were to be made upon us by a cultured but exacting public, had we dreamed of the financial responsibilities we should be obliged to assume, had we suspected that the business could fluctuate from a Wednesday zero to a Sunday infinitude, we would never have had the courage to attempt the tremendous task of filling that long felt want. But being entirely ignorant of our ignorance, we went cheerfully into an enterprise which soon grew to such proportions as to outstrip our greatest expectations, and which set us such a pace that run as we might we could scarcely keep abreast with the new time which we ourselves had ushered into College history.



II

COLLEGE TRADITIONS

We had no one but ourselves to blame, however, for any of the trials or hardships that we encountered, for we had received but little encouragement from the faculty and student body in promoting the Inn. The faculty feared that the girls might be tempted to indulge unwisely in sweets and dainties prepared for them so close at hand; the upper classmen seemed quite content with things as they were; the College had managed all these years without a hotel, it could continue as in the past. The girls had been in the habit of going to Poughkeepsie where they patronized Smith Brothers' Restaurant, the home of the famous S. B. Cough Drops, and they rather enjoyed the lark of a trip to town. Moreover, when they did not have time to go to the city, there were certain cottages in Arlington where they could always call for any dainty they especially craved.

As for guests who wished to stay all night there were several cottages, notably Mrs. Sarah Smith's, where a room could be had for a surprisingly small sum. Mrs. Smith was a woman of many accomplishments being first of all an artist of no little ability in doing up fancy wash waists and dresses; on entering her parlor one would find a wonderful display of laundry work,

beautiful waists pinned to the window curtains from ceiling to sill, while dresses which might have stood alone hung from the frames of her ancestors. One could easily recognize Professor Salmon's dress of white roses, every petal distinct, like flowers in bloom. There might be a blue organdie that looked as if Miss Underhill were about to appear; or a lavender waist suggesting Miss Leach. Surely this was *high* art indeed, and the best part of it all was that Sarah Smith loved her work with the passion of one who finds expression in the use of pencil or brush.

Besides being an artist Mrs. Smith could tell fortunes with cards and tea leaves that were sure to come true; she could hit the past with such accuracy that one was forced to believe in the future as she saw it depicted in the tea-cup; every freshman was assured of a brilliant college career and every senior would find a handsome lover waiting for her at the lodge the day she received her diploma, and the hopes of every doting mother would not only be realized but far exceeded by the conjuring of some kind fate.

And so you see it was not without many sentimental misgivings that we started what seemed to be a direct competition with some of the College traditions that we too loved best; for had not we in our day banqueted at Smith Brothers', coaxed a motherly neighbor for waffles on a lazy over-slept morning, and revived our hopes and aspirations by shuffling cards or tipping tea-cups with Mrs. Sarah Smith? But here was opportunity beckoning to us to come and fill the



WHAT IS SURE TO COME TRUE

long felt want and nothing could deter us from the venture.

While the alumnae gave us their hearty approbation and encouragement by occasional visits, the freshmen and I might say the sophomores also, proved to be our most regular patrons, for being less bound than the upper classmen by the traditions of the past, they were more willing to welcome a new feature into their college life. Their parents also granted us a ready recognition by sending in their applications for commencement rooms two, three, and four years in advance.



III

GREAT MINDS MOVE IN THE SAME CHANNEL

As great discoveries or inventions are sometimes revealed simultaneously to two people at different ends of the earth, so the idea of opening a tea-room near Vassar College, came like an inspiration to both Miss Lapham and me, who were complete strangers, at about the same time. In the spring of 1902, Miss Lapham came to Poughkeepsie in search of a suitable location for a tea-room, only to find the building of the Inn already well underway. This was quite an unpleasant shock to her and for a time she did not know whether to continue with her plans or to withdraw entirely; after due consideration she gave up all thought of rivalry and decided to unite her fortunes (+A) with mine (—B); co-operation seemed better than competition, especially as we both desired companionship in the work, and fortunately found each other most congenial. Our optimism in regard to our respective abilities to open and conduct an inn was quite pardonable when one considers that Miss Lapham was comparatively fresh from College (class of 1896) and quite familiar with the needs of the community; while I, besides having worked my way through an academic

course,* had added ten years of teaching to my life's experience; moreover, five of those years had been spent in the Central High School of Minneapolis, teaching mathematics and science; pray, what better preparation could be desired by two unsophisticated young women for running a first class hotel? Had it not been for the leniency of our patrons, the good fellowship of the College girls, and the lack of competition, it is doubtful if we could have "put it over" as we did on an unsuspecting public.

*Two years at Vassar, 1891-1893; two years at the University of Minnesota, receiving B. S. degree in 1897.



IV

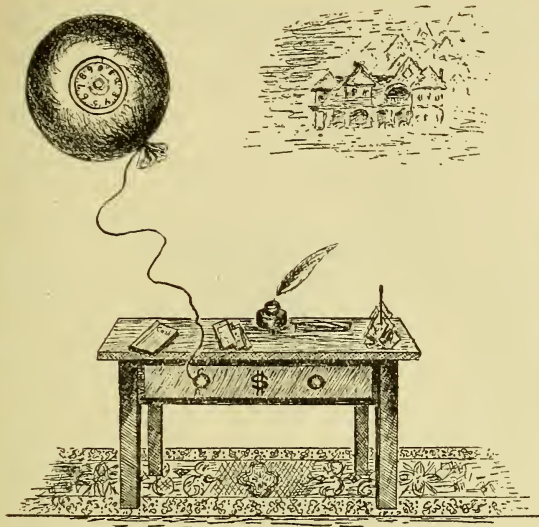
AIR—THE STUFF THE INN WAS MADE OF

The lot on which the Inn stands was purchased in 1901 through the agency of Mr. Harry C. Barker who was at that time just beginning his law practice in Poughkeepsie, and being a young man with a vision he too saw the possibilities of an Inn near Vassar College. When I paid him the first twenty-five dollars to bind the bargain and insisted upon dictating the contract myself so that there could be no possible chance of my losing even that small sum in case of failure to meet the future payments promptly, he became so interested in the project that he immediately began negotiations for a loan which was to be secured by a first mortgage on the property. He also made arrangements with the contractors to accept my notes for any expenses that could not be covered by the amount of the mortgage. This all seemed very easy and I felt absolutely no hesitation in assuming an indebtedness for many thousands of dollars, so strong was my faith in the enterprise, and so undaunted my courage.

Mr. Percival Lloyd, an architect of more than local fame, was also most enthusiastic in promoting the Inn, and was untiring in his efforts to present a plan that would not only meet with the

business requirements, but which would at the same time, satisfy the aesthetic tastes of our most fastidious patrons. Mr. Lloyd was a most liberal architect for he actually allowed me to have a few ideas of my own which he accepted and used as fundamentals in constructing the building.

Of course one would not think of starting such an enterprise without any money at all; I had as much as three or four hundred dollars for a working capital, but by a strange coincidence my bank account was soon doubled. I had been spending the winter in the west while waiting for my plans to mature, and when returning to Poughkeepsie in the early spring, the New York Central train on which I had engaged accommodations, became side tracked near Buffalo, where with a few others I was stranded without food for about twelve hours in a cold sleeping-car. This exposure made me quite ill, although if I had known that the experience was to replenish my bank account I should no doubt have been able to maintain the best of spirits and good health, which all goes to show how paradoxical is the philosophy that one should not worry or get sick over seeming misfortunes. Mr. Barker took up the matter with the attorney for the New York Central Railway, who showed a willingness to make a settlement that would compensate me in part at least, for what I had suffered on account of the negligence of their trainmen, and accordingly sent me a check for three hundred dollars.



OUR MONEY COFFERS AND SAFE-DEPOSIT
VAULTS IN THE EARLY DAYS

Thus from the beginning, from the germinating of the idea, the materialization of the Inn was constantly furthered by a kind Providence, and in later years when financial failure threatened, something always happened to ward off the calamity. It was no accident but a real miracle that brought Miss Lapham to me just as the Inn was nearing completion; it was time to buy tables and chairs and dishes, beds and rugs and draperies; my credit was good but my bank account was nil; moreover, to select these articles by oneself seemed unnatural and uninteresting. Miss Lapham with her boundless enthusiasm, efficiency and good taste, gave a new impetus to the enterprise; her cheer and vivacity afforded a delightful companionship that completely revived my waning faith; besides, her substantial contribution to the financial account, or should I say deficit, gave assurance that the Inn would be ready for business when the College opened in September.

A greater outlay of money than we had anticipated, was required to make the Inn attractive, and to give it that air which has been commented upon so frequently; but, you may ask, how could it help having an air when that was the stuff it was made of? It was not long before our combined fortunes, $A + (-B) = -C$, came to the tragic condition which might be more appropriately expressed by the formula $A - B = -X$, or as we felt, by minus infinity; but why worry? College would soon open and money would come pouring into our coffers (a

desk drawer without a lock) and our negative bank account would shortly be balanced by the positive sign of prosperity. Alas, little did we know the propensities of college girls.



V

PROCRASTINATION IS THE THIEF OF—THE CASH-REGISTER

As I look back upon those first few weeks when we tried to make ends meet, it seems surprising that the financial difficulties did not throw us entirely out of poise and bring our business to an abrupt and premature end; every night after cashing up, or rather charging up, we sat and looked at each other in consternation, gasping--ten dollars cash, twenty-five dollars charged, or fifty dollars cash, one hundred dollars charged. What were we coming to and how would it end? The accounts piled up so rapidly that at the expiration of a few weeks we found there were four or five hundred dollars standing on our books, a sum that would have made a neat little deposit upon our indebtedness. We knew that the girls would eventually be "good pay," but meanwhile this did not help us to solve our immediate problems of grocery bills, and wages, for standing accounts seemed only to accelerate the running expenses.

At that time the Inn was little more than a tea-room and scarcely deserved its dignified title; there were only six bed-rooms and as my partner and I were supposed to occupy at least one of these rooms, there were only five that could be scheduled for public use. So urgent

was the call for money however, it was only at dull times that we could enjoy the luxury of a bed-room; it is hardly true to say that we enjoyed it even then, for when business was poor we worried ourselves into such a condition of insomnia that it mattered little where we spent the night; while if we were fortunate enough to be busy we were usually so happily tired that we could sleep almost "any old place", and the thought of a few extra dollars frequently found us sweetly dreaming in the most unexpected corners; we would gladly have taken to the roof if the style of architecture had not forbid. Many a night I slept in the linen closet which was barely large enough to hold a cot; though the ventilation was poor even with the door open, I slept the sleep of the ambitious and awoke in the morning refreshed and ready for action, feeling exhilarated by the thought that I had taken an easy way of earning the price of a room, and that was no mean sum in those days for we had set our standards high and charged accordingly, asking as much as a dollar and a half for Number I, and a dollar per night for the smaller rooms, thereby outraging all former customs of the neighborhood. Thank heaven, our guests usually paid cash so that the sacrifice of a bed on our part was doubly rewarded, cash being our greatest need.

It was the vision of a cash business that had led us on, but now that this lure began to fade into a mass of mystical figures, we wondered how we were to proceed, for while we sincerely

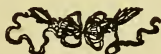
desired to be accommodating we were deeply chagrined at our limitations. We did not have the courage to refuse credit to our patrons, and if we had tried to do so it would have been a death blow to the Inn, for College boys and girls the world over are treated with greater leniency in money matters than any other class of people, and this is quite right for it would be impossible to find any other group who in the long run (emphasize long once more) are so punctiliously honest in all their dealings.

Procrastination is a fault that seems to prevail among the young, especially those who are subject to educational influences; it is the kind of fault that cannot be easily eradicated or isolated, for procrastination in one begets it in another; it is contagious and spreads like the Liberty measles, a disease which seems mild but is always irritating and often disastrous in its effects. We too became procrastinators through necessity and if it had not been for the fact that we also had almost unlimited credit, not even its *airy* construction would have kept the Inn afloat.

In order to overcome this habit of delinquency on the part of students, I would suggest that a new course of study be introduced into the college curriculum; it should be a compulsory and not an elective subject, and might be called "The Ethics of Doing it Now." Such problems as the following should be presented for consideration: How many signed meal orders running for six months, does it take to pay the chef his

first week's wages? or, If each of a thousand girls has her hair shampooed on *tick*, why is the hair-dresser's gas-meter shut off? or again, If a dress-maker and her helper make a dress and a half in a day and a half, and the bill stands a year and a half, why does the dress-maker wear her last winter's hat to the Sunday school picnic? Such practical questions as these might impress upon the young the result of shiftlessness in money matters.

Fortunately for us whenever our own enforced procrastination became alarming, there was always some kind friend to reach out a *lending* hand and rescue us from a complete cessation of Inn-activities by the offer of a small loan. A noted member of the faculty who had always expressed herself as being seriously opposed to the loose credit system among college students, helped us out of our first distress; one or two others who became interested in the enterprise and thought our efforts worthy of encouragement came to our assistance later by extending to us the use of small loans; neither did Mr. Barker fail us during these early years when a crisis seemed impending.

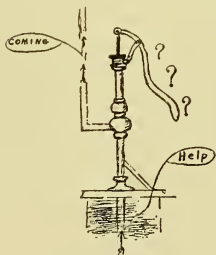
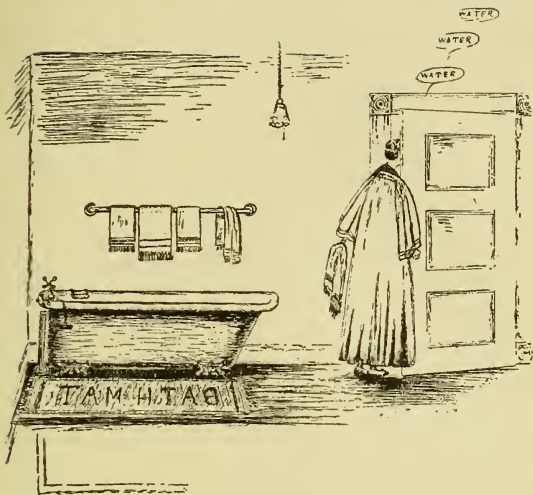


VI

OH, FOR THE KNOWLEDGE OF A CIVIL ENGINEER!

Besides the distractions of high finance there were endless tragedies connected with the purely mechanical problems of the Inn; as said before a knowledge of civil engineering would have been of inestimable value in securing a practical working equipment at the beginning of our career, for it would have saved us endless worry and expense. We were so imbued with the idea of making the Inn attractive to the public eye, and it was so necessary to make our money go as far as possible, that we sacrificed the utilitarian for the aesthetic as is too frequently the case when one's capital is limited.

As the Inn was located too far beyond the city limits to obtain a supply of running water, it was necessary to install a local water system of our own. The drilling of a deep artesian well seemed to offer the whole solution of the problem but it was only the beginning. We had been misled by our contractors who assured us that a hand pump would be sufficient to pump the water into a tank located in the attic from which it was to be fed to the bath-rooms and the kitchen sinks. We were attracted by the cheapness of such a pump as compared with others, and unwisely submitted to a plan that would scarcely be ade-



DRY CLEANING

quate for a pair of newly weds in a private bungalow. The pump might have been all right if we had been able to find a man given to perpetual motion, but no such person could be found; the pumping was so intermittent that sometimes the cook would be obliged to go down cellar and give a few turns to the pump before he could water the soup or make a pot of tea, and we found it next to impossible to keep a chef under these conditions. Often when the pump man had proved to be a slacker on his job, a guest would be lolling in the bath-tub waiting for the water to splash, or worse still, would come to the office in full dress to heap invectives of wrath upon our heads for this unaccountable method of dry-cleaning.

It is often more difficult to get rid of a good thing than it is to obtain it in the first place; and so with us the problem of securing water was not nearly so serious as getting rid of it after it had done its work. In testing the various schemes for drainage, one after another proved absolutely futile and inadequate. The following story fully illustrates the state of mind in which a woman grapples with such problems. A friend called one day and found me weeping bitterly; with expressions of deep sympathy she exclaimed, "Why, my dear, what is the matter?" Laying my head upon her friendly shoulder, I sobbed "The cess-pool is——"; well, we will here draw the curtain on this heart rending scene and dismiss the subject for it would take too much space to tell of all the tragedies that oc-

curred on account of this very necessary but uninteresting problem; sufficient to say that our greatest trials in this line naturally happened at the busiest and therefore the most inopportune times.

The heating plant presented experiences almost as distressing as the water question, and it would be difficult to tell whether most of our troubles came from the system employed or from neglect on the part of the firemen, for it has always seemed almost impossible to find a man who had sufficient intelligence, or interest in his work, to build a hot fire on a cold day and a cool fire on a hot day. We tried cold air furnaces, intermittent steam heat, tepid and hot water plants, before we met with any degree of success in keeping the house warm during the winter months. The cold-air furnace is sometimes very erroneously alluded to as a hot air plant, but why it is called a plant would be hard to tell, unless it is because it is so delicate and flourishes only in warm weather, or it may be because it needs the constant application of shovel and rake. It was a fickle thing--this air plant--changing its currents with every shifting wind; sometimes it seemed as if we were up with it the greater part of the night trying to nurture the spark of life in its embers, and coaxing it to send just a little more heat to No. 6, or to No. 8, and we never felt sure that the occupant of the room would not be found gassed in the morning. We did not like steam heat any better for there was no constancy about it; the

radiators were either as hot as--steam, or as cold as—. The bombarding of the pipes on a cold winter's morning was not conducive to sweet dreams, and sometimes our guests upset us for the whole day by rising before breakfast was ready. We finally lit upon a water plant which is as superior to an air plant in its reliability as a water-lily is to an orchid. With a man on the job all night during the winter, the house is now kept at a very comfortable temperature.

Soon after the formation of our partnership, a division of labor and responsibility came about rather automatically, Miss Lapham keeping to the middle of the road by looking after the supplies and the serving, while I assumed the extremes of finance and waste, vibrating with studied agility from bills at the front door to tin cans at the back. The bills I could usually dispose of in one way (cash) or another (bluff), but sometimes neither of these appliances availed to keep the back yard looking like a city park or a public play-ground, for the waste that accumulates almost instantaneously about a hotel on a busy day is a problem that even the times of intensive Hooverizing could neither solve nor eliminate.



VII

THE INN A SOCIAL CENTER

From its first inception the Inn was destined to become a place of festivity, but in time as we shall see, it proved to be of real practical value to the students, to the faculty, and to the neighborhood. True to our anticipations and our mental pictures, the girls came all day long in twos and threes for light refreshments; at meal times they soon acquired the habit of dining at the Inn with chosen friends, when they felt unusually weary, or when they wished to avoid the noise and confusion of the College dining-room. Special menus were offered for dinner parties ordered in advance, so that a visiting mother or father was soon educated to do the correct thing by providing a banquet for daughter and her friends.

THE MAHOGANY TABLE was almost our first purchase at Luckey, Platt & Co.'s store; it was an extension table with a highly polished top and looked very attractive when set with doilies and flowers and candles. It was soon in great demand and reservations were often made some time in advance. Whoever happened to be the hostess was known for that hour of serving as "Miss Mahogany"; the waiters adopted this name as a matter of convenience probably; it was easier than learning a new name every

day; they would say, What does Miss Mahogany have to night? What is Miss Mahogany's next course? The poor old mahogany table has done good service during the last seventeen years—it is time it had a new shine.

Even with our limited knowledge of student psychology we soon discovered that regular meals would not do for the College trade; regularity was the one thing that the girls hoped to avoid for they knew the Vassar bill of fare so well they could predict to a minute when they would again have tomb-stone pudding or coffee ice-cream. So we adopted a simple menu that could be served to order at any time of day or evening. Our only table d'hote meal was the Sunday chicken dinner which proved to be but little less popular than our special Sunday night dishes. It was not particularly pleasing to us to discover that the universal day of rest was to be the busiest day of the week; that such proved to be the case was largely due to the fact that Sunday is essentially a home day and the girls moved by their loneliness, sought some gratifying distraction. This desire for something out of the ordinary routine seemed to be appeased by going with one's chum to the Inn; the soft candle light, the pretty evening dresses of the girls, the quick-stepping colored boys who served, all tended to produce an air of cheerfulness that soon dissipated the twilight blue of the Sabbath, which unless it is ousted, is so prone to endure till the morrow producing the proverbially blue Monday. A Sunday night supper

at the Inn seemed to insure a week well started on the road of optimistic endeavor.

That the Inn had won an undisputed place in the affections of the College girls was shown by the songs they sang at their dinner parties and banquets, for they never failed to include the Inn, Miss Lapham and myself in "Drink her Down, Drink her Down." While the Inn has continued to be a place of festivity and is quite universally loved, the personal relations between the Vassar girls and the management at the Inn have never since been so intimate, so endearing as during those first few years.



VIII

THE INN A PUBLIC BENEFIT

The faculty also came to look upon the Inn as a great convenience; besides providing a place of entertainment for their own out of town guests, they found that it offered the solution of many domestic and social problems concerning the life of the students. Cooking in the bedrooms became less frequent, and College halls no longer exhaled the odors of savory dishes. Instead of making rarebits or fudge, or eating candy and pickles between meals, the girls came to the Inn showing they were cultivating an appetite for more wholesome food by ordering soup, meat, salads and sandwiches, rather than ice-cream and devil's food cake.

It was never too late for breakfast at the Inn, and whether it was a member of the faculty, or a student, a late riser could always find sustenance here long after the closing of the dining-room doors in the dormitories. Any one who was run down in health and in need of a special diet according to the advice of the resident physician could obtain such food at the Inn much more easily than from the College kitchen.

Another question that had been very puzzling in College discipline was the entertainment of young men who came to visit their sisters and friends; whereas chaperones had formerly been required when the girls went off campus with

gentlemen, they were now given the privilege of going to the Inn with their brothers or other girls' brothers, unchaperoned, provided they could do so without cutting chapel or any other College function. At the Inn there was always an air of chaperonage created by the very atmosphere of the place, its publicity, and its ever open dining-room and parlor.

The old time Sunday night clubs for planning spreads to be served in the College rooms had to go; they soon lost prestige after the Inn opened its doors for here could be found the best of food and every desirable dainty, without the trouble and disorder involved by cooking and eating in inconvenient bed-rooms, not to mention the waste of time and money consumed in marketing. Some of these clubs had become quite exclusive; they adopted certain names, and almost took on the nature of a sorority that is perpetuated from year to year by voting in new members who were chosen not because of their ability to prepare a tempting meal, nor for their lusty appetites, nor for their brilliant after dinner speeches, but for purely social reasons; so the Inn did another real service by creating a more democratic fad.

Compared with many hotels the democracy of the Inn seems quite phenomenal. A short time ago while visiting a hotel at a famous summer resort, I found that the proprietor had hit upon a most unique plan for seating his guests at meal time. All the people who had rooms with bath were placed on the lake side of the

dining-room while those without baths were ushered to the opposite side. This division seemed to extend to the service also, the *w. b. s.* being served with asparagus tips while the *w. o. b. s.* drew only the stalks. The NEW waitresses were tried out on the *w. o. b. s.*, but as soon as they became proficient they were immediately promoted to the other side of the dining-room. This plan of segregation was not so bad as it might seem on first thought, especially for the *w. b. s.*; it brought together the women with dogs, the fat men who could not stand the shock (to others as well as to themselves) of bathing on the shore, and others who found interest in their common ailments. The *w. o. b. s.* were not without consolation, however, in regard to this class distinction. Being more likely to have children than dogs, they found an immediate bond of friendship with their companions at the table. The intellectuals too who for some strange reason are not always blessed with sufficient worldly goods to afford a private bath, found congenial acquaintances on their far side of the dining-room, as well as on the lake shore. While the Inn tries to be democratic, it has never been very cordial in welcoming the pet dog; although sometimes when business is dull it is a great temptation to wink at a lunch-basket that barks.

The popularity of the Inn was not confined alone to those associated with Vassar College. The residents of Arlington (the community just outside the campus) soon came to feel that it was a friendly institution instead of a grasping

competitor. The standards set them by a place conducted on more business like methods than they had employed, led the neighbors to install bath-rooms and electric lights in their cottages, and to improve their homes in various ways so that many people who had previously gone to one of the downtown hotels rather than take a room in a private house, were now quite content to room in a cottage and take their meals at the Inn. With the improved conditions, prices advanced, so that now the rooming of College guests has become quite a business in itself among the women of Arlington.

The increased number of visitors aroused the civic pride of the community, and the extra money set in circulation, made it possible to introduce many improvements, so that now sidewalks and street lights, neatly kept lawns and gardens and shade trees indicate an enlightened and prosperous suburb. We are still hoping for an improved roadway and a water supply that will guarantee adequate fire protection, and no doubt these desires will soon be fulfilled. Now that the women of New York State have the right to vote, politicians can no longer consider the Vassar community as one to be ignored or trifled with as in the past. Mrs. MacCracken (wife of the President of the College, Dr. Henry Noble MacCracken) has become a decided leader in civic affairs and there is now every reason to hope that Arlington may soon become a part of the City of Poughkeepsie, with the promise of all the improvements that such a union implies.

IX

THE LONG FELT WANT BECOMES A MATTER OF COURSE

As time passed it was inevitable that the much appreciated "long felt want" should, alas, come to be taken as a *matter of course*, while the relations between Vassar College and the Inn gradually assumed the aspect of a strictly business proposition. It would have been most unreasonable on our part to expect the expressions of surprise and approval that greeted us at the opening to continue indefinitely, but the joy of endeavor had been largely fostered by the generous praises of our guests and as the newness wore off, the inspiration that comes with the birth of a new idea also waned, leaving us with the cold fact that "business is business."

The greatest strain upon one's heart strings when running an inn that is essentially a place of gaiety, comes from being a constant spectator of other people's pleasures, being in it but not of it. While we were glad to promote the happiness of others, there was a certain sadness connected with being simply contributory to the festivities of a life which we too had once enjoyed so keenly; it was disheartening to find ourselves gradually eliminated from those functions that had made college so delightful to us

and which had led us to settle near the Vassar Campus.

This divorcement of interests was due not only to our intense absorption in business affairs, but to the shifting population of the community. There were constant changes in the faculty besides the endless succession of seniors and freshmen. The freshmen are well named for they certainly bring refreshment once a year to an institution where all must ere long be cast in the same mold. But in spite of the dear freshmen who came every fall with a breath from the outside world, with their delightful mannerisms, their originality in dress, their timidity and homesickness, we found that the academic life of a woman's college had begun to pall upon our spirits and we longed for a broader life that had more to offer in the way of democratic interests and stirring experiences.



X

MISS LAPHAM MARRIES

It was at this "matter of course" stage in the development of the Inn that Miss Lapham succumbed to the attractions of a more domestic life and was married (1905) to Clement J. France, Ph.D., a popular young attorney from her home, town, Canandaigua, New York. They moved to the far west shortly after their marriage where both have proved themselves true to the progressive ideals of their college life. Miss Lapham left at a most opportune time for her, for although our miniature Waldorf Astoria was fast outgrowing its newness, our debts were not so old nor so threatening as to cause any deep presentiment of disaster. Her departure was a real calamity to me however, for besides losing the inspiration of her companionship, I was obliged not only to assume greater responsibility in all departments of the work, but to shoulder the financial burden alone. Miss Lapham's was a personality that left a lasting impression; her determination and good judgment had done much to establish the policy of the Inn, and her vivacity helped to create that air of hospitality which marked the Inn from the beginning as a social center for the Vassar girls and their friends.

XI

I WRITE MY THESIS

From time to time I have been asked by various representatives of the press to write something concerning my experiences in establishing and conducting the Inn, but with the pressure of many duties the opportunity seemed always deferred to an indefinite future. But when in the summer of 1917, I decided to accept an offer to rent the Inn, and so secure for myself two whole years of freedom, the thought came to me that now was my chance to write the belated article about this institution to which I have devoted so many years of my life.

As the college professor obtains a leave of absence, does some original research work, writes her thesis, and returns with an additional degree to her name, so I too would write my thesis; I would search my own memory, my own past, for those original experiences, the rendering of which might offer encouragement to other souls, and so secure for myself a degree not to be represented by symbolic letters, but a degree of satisfaction in the thought that the past with all the pains of defeat and the joy of endeavor, might carry some message to others who are also blazing the trail of emancipated womanhood.

Instinctively I have followed the line of thought suggested by the questions most fre-

quently asked by those observing people who upon visiting the Inn have had their curiosity aroused in regard to the origin and development of a place which seems so definitely to possess a personality of its own. The questions that seemed most pointed and which I encountered most often, are the following:

1. How did you come to think of building an Inn near Vassar College?
2. Did it require a good deal of capital?
3. Do you have trouble in keeping your help?
4. Has the Inn been a success?
5. Do you advise other women to go into business?

In tracing the early stages of the Inn, I have unavoidably answered some of these questions in part, but now I shall proceed to a more detailed analysis of the different phases of its development.





THE INN IN 1902

XII

SLAMMING THE DOOR ON OPPORTUNITY

No one who had attended College previous to the year 1902, would think of asking such a thing as, How did it happen? for during those early days the prevailing questions had been: Why doesn't some one start an Inn? Wouldn't it pay? Isn't there any one sufficiently enterprising and public spirited?

The opportunity was there for all to see; it only remained for some one with courage and the power of initiation to respond to the call. The following story which appeared in the Pittsburgh Post illustrates how easy it is for opportunity to be ignored: "A stranger knocked at a man's door and told him of a fortune to be made.

"Um!" said the man, "it appears that considerable effort will be involved."

"Oh, yes," said the stranger, "you will pass many sleepless nights and toilsome days!"

"Um!" said the man, "and who are you?"

"I am called opportunity."

"Um!" said the man, "you call yourself opportunity, but to me you look like hard work," and he slammed the door in his face.

No doubt this opportunity to open an Inn near Vassar College had knocked at many doors before it found those who were willing to give it entertainment instead of slamming the door in its face.

XIII

FAITH AS A WORKING CAPITAL

In regard to the second question concerning the amount of capital involved, I think I have already proved that money is not the only asset required; while the Inn was said to be built of air, its foundation was of the firmest faith--a faith sublimely unshaken by criticism or by threatened financial ruin. Moreover, in creating a place like the Inn, faith, or credit which is but one form of faith, seems to be the only available capital for an individual enterprise, for it stands to reason that a woman with a fortune sufficiently large to build and equip the Inn, would not feel the necessity of doing anything at all for a living, neither would she risk her money where so much hard work and responsibility are demanded. While the inns at Wellesley and Bryn Mawr have been owned and managed by stock companies composed of alumnae and faculty, these institutions, so far as I have been able to ascertain, have never been self supporting. This fact goes to show that a paid manager or employee does not usually attain the same degree of success as an individual who feels the pressure of personal responsibility; necessity is a great slave driver.

To start an enterprise may be likened to buying an automobile; the initial cost is a trifle com-

pared with the upkeep. In our case, if we had only had a little more money--just enough for gasoline, say--to keep the Inn running smoothly for a year or two, or even for a few months, all would have been well. But after the first sprint our gas was about gone; there was no lubricating bank account; the gears were all balled up with bills; there were no non-skid tires to keep us in the middle of the road; there were no free-air tanks by the way side; all we could do was to borrow some gasoline, open the cut-out for more power, toot our horn and go as far as we could. Our debtors mistook the noise for a sign of prosperity and charged larger bills than before.

As the business grew the Inn by comparison seemed to shrink in size; while it continued to be unique in its ability to anticipate and to meet the peculiar demands of college trade, it could avoid competition only by providing adequate accommodations for all who came, and by maintaining a style of service not to be surpassed, so that no rival would dare to start a similar place in the neighborhood. And so the Inn began to grow like an amoeba by throwing out protuberances here and there, and it grew so fast, it hurt; it almost died of growing pains and financial exhaustion. It would have been a mark of greater wisdom no doubt if we had gone more slowly but smaller tea-rooms had already sprung up in the neighborhood and the call for better equipment seemed imperative; instead of curbing our ambitions we pushed on to still greater achievements.

The first addition to the Inn proved to be larger than the original building; it not only enlarged the dining-room, but provided also a reception room and eight more bed-rooms. As a new dress demands a new pair of shoes, so these improvements called for better working facilities, and new pantries and kitchens soon followed. With this more complete equipment in the rear for conducting a larger business, it seemed profitable to again extend the dining-room, and to add a sun-parlor also which could be used to supplement the table service. And so for many years one improvement seemed to require another in order to build up the business. As a result of this mushroom growth, the sum total indebtedness on the Inn increased appallingly. Planning for the new equipment might not have been so fatal if it had not been for the "wear and tear" on the old furnishings which needed constantly to be replaced.



XIV

THE CRISIS

With the increased business capacity resulting from the numerous additions to the Inn, the credit accounts, alas, as well as the debts, multiplied in like proportion; instead of a few hundred dollars outstanding, thousands of dollars were tied up in the charge accounts. It was no longer easy to borrow sums of money large enough to carry the Inn over a hard time such as it always experienced during the dull months of winter, for loans of correspondingly greater magnitude were required to relieve the situation.

Meanwhile there was the interest on the mortgage and the various notes to be paid besides the notes themselves; there were taxes and insurance and the general running expenses to be met. It became a case of not exactly robbing Peter to pay Paul, but of making Peter wait, just as I had to wait for the college girls to pay me; and thus current debts were neglected in order to pay the notes and contracts that were constantly falling due. Peter, who may be taken to represent the men supplying the Inn with groceries, meat and other provisions on credit, protected himself so to speak, by charging exorbitant prices, and who could blame him for so doing? To change tradesmen however, under such conditions, even though you feel

that you are being imposed upon, is only to invite disaster, for when you owe a large sum to any business firm and cannot pay that indebtedness, they "have you," and Peter certainly had me in his clutches.

A crisis became inevitable as the financial affairs grew more and more complicated; the profits were exceedingly good and were used constantly to cut down the old indebtedness, but even so there seemed to be no way of averting the crisis which came swift and hard when it did come. I woke up one morning to find myself, not famous, but in the eyes of some--infamous; my credit was wiped out, the banks refused any further loans, and all my creditors clamored for their money at once; a condition which might throw almost any concern out of business. When such a calamity comes it is surprising how friends flee, how ready they are to doubt one's integrity, how fearful that they may be put to the acid test of friendship--to lend money, how unwilling to listen with a sympathetic ear, or to reiterate their former expressions of confidence and affection.

The Inn was not thrown into bankruptcy as some expected, for the assets were readily acknowledged to be far greater than the liabilities; neither was it closed, but a trustee was appointed, and then began a long series of events which must have been distressing to him, as well as to myself, although not in the same degree of intensity perhaps; he was very dictatorial, or at least he seemed so to me having had my own

freedom for so long, and I was rebellious; so that conditions soon took on the nature of a personal fight rather than a plan of co-operation for the benefit of all concerned. A good game of chess with its checkmate and counter check could scarcely have been more exciting, although it might have been more fun.

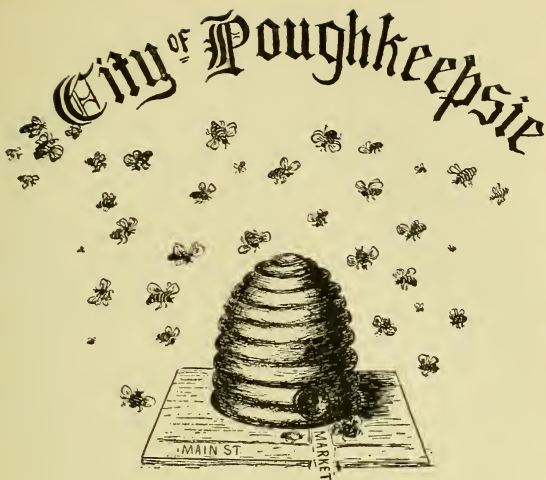
Of course a trustee should be trusted--that's what he is for. If I had been a man he would no doubt have treated me with greater tenderness and so won my confidence, but being a woman, and a business woman at that, I was naturally effeminate--so much so that at times I was even cattish and showed my claws whenever my fur was brushed the wrong way by any new mandate or any added restriction to my freedom. My back hit its highest parabolic curve on that memorable day following close upon commencement when he emptied my safe and cash-register of their contents, and notified the bank where I was doing business that my checks were not to be acknowledged.

But why should a trustee be expected to know that a woman could not live all summer on the commencement left-overs (in those days the Inn was not open for business during the vacation;). Even with the war time recipies which had not yet been given to the world it is doubtful if I could have put up such a tremendously economical stunt. Growing weary of soft strawberry ice, stale devil's food cake and puffed rice as a diet, I began to wonder what I could do to vary the menu. Accordingly I consulted some of

the grocers who kindly offered to let me exchange flour, pickles, baking-powder and sugar, for fresh eggs, butter and green vegetables, so that on the whole I fared much better than one might expect. It would have been wiser for me to tell the trustee of my predicament, but it is often easier to be a martyr than to seek justice or to accept favors.

The tortois like movement of the law was the most irritating feature of the whole condition; the trades people were compelled to wait months for the legal process that was to pay them the money which was already theirs and which was lying idle in the bank. This embarrassed me very much indeed and hurt my standing, weak-kneed as it was, for it seemed impossible to offer any plausible explanation.

However, I will not dwell longer upon the many seeming hardships that were imposed upon me by a trusteeship; I say SEEMING for as I look back upon my experiences I see that they would not have been so tragic to a person who was less rebellious. But I should like to impress a word of advice upon the reader; if you ever find yourself in a position where you must have a trustee, make the best of it; take him for better or worse, for it will surely be worse for you if you don't and it may be better for you if you do.



EMBLEM OF THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE

XV

WITH FORTY-SEVEN CENTS TO MY CREDIT, I PREPARE FOR VASSAR'S FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

As if to make a pleasant company, misfortunes came crowding upon me. One mortgage was foreclosed and then a second, although the interest on both was fully paid and had always been paid on the date agreed upon. Alas, my controversies with the trustee, and my attacks upon the politicians for their failure to give Arlington something for their taxes, had invited the wrath of some powerful enemies who relentlessly pushed me to the ragged edge of failure.

But just as in the beginning, so now whenever I was about to give up in despair, a miracle happened; first, an investment that I had made in some Canadian land netted me a profit of two thousand dollars, a small inheritance brought me a few thousand more, a kind brother who had faith in the Inn as well as in my own business ability, loaned me several thousand, so that in a few years I was able to offer my creditors an acceptable settlement; it was a happy day for me when the trustee was dismissed.

If my creditors had been more patient I could have paid them in full eventually, but they were insistent and it seemed wiser to settle with them

at the rate of sixty cents on the dollar, which was the best that I could do at the time, and so end the controversy. It should be remembered that the salary paid to the trustee, the fees of the prosecuting attorneys, as well as those of my own lawyer, and the losses entailed by all these unhappy distractions, would have gone a long way toward paying my debts in full. But there was no use of lamenting over the past; I had done the best I could and there was only one thing to do now and that was to go forward as courageously as possible. Since that time I have discovered that the rate of settlement (60%) was far larger than the average man makes when he is pushed to the wall by his creditors.

Once more all seemed to be going smoothly when the lady who had kindly helped me out of one of my former difficulties by taking up the second mortgage of \$3400.00, requested me to pay her this sum; it must have been a mere trifle to her for she was a very wealthy woman, but it seemed an enormous and almost impossible amount to me; I was scarcely on my feet after the other troubles through which I had passed and my courage sank to the lowest ebb. I could not understand her insistent haste, for the interest had been paid promptly as in the previous cases, but the lady wanted her money (or the Inn) and she was going to have it whether or no or else there would be an interesting auction sale in Arlington when the Inn with all its furnishings would go to the highest bidder.

It ought to have been easy enough to obtain

this small sum of thirty-four hundred dollars (the first mortgage being only \$7100.00) after mastering situations that seemed so much more serious, but not so--there was no bank and no person who had so much money to lend. The mortgagor had struck at an opportune time for the war in Europe had just been declared, and money was so scarce that loans were difficult to secure. There seemed to be no one to offer a helping or protecting hand, there was no dissenting voice when they talked of an auction sale. There were a number of individuals who expected to buy the whole equipment at auction for very little more than the sum of the two mortgages, about one-fourth the cost of the property and furnishings. Some even went so far as to plan whom they would engage to manage the Inn after it came into their possession.

It soon became quite apparent that there were people who regretted their own short sightedness in not taking advantage of the opportunity of opening an inn near Vassar College in the early days; they were jealous of the initiative of an outsider, and were now willing to make up for their own delinquency by reaching out to grasp from me the child of my mind and heart.

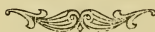
No doubt there are times when it becomes necessary to foreclose a mortgage in order to protect an investment, but there are occasions when such a procedure becomes nothing more nor less than legalized robbery for it may mean the forced sale of valuable property at a great sacrifice, and it always means big fees for the

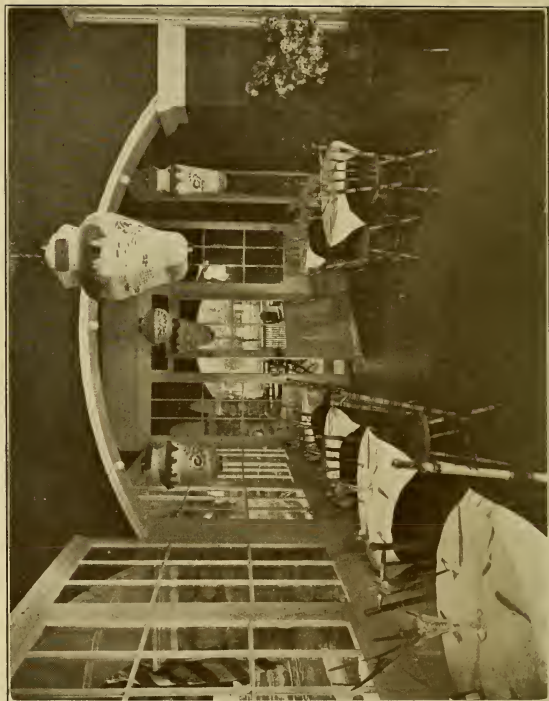
lawyers to be paid by the unfortunate party of the second part. It is deplorable but never the less true that there are unscrupulous persons who resort to this method of enriching themselves by obtaining possession of what rightfully belongs to another, and they take advantage of a financial panic to make their acts seem justifiable; petty lawyers have also been known to stir up foreclosures for the sake of the fees.

There seemed to be no possible way of obtaining thirty-four hundred dollars to pay the mortgage; I begged for a little more time, and a little more time still, so that the day of doom would fall late in June after the close of the College year; this would give me a chance to use my year's profits which were tied up in student accounts until commencement time, but even so I could see no way of paying the whole sum. It finally occurred to me that I might obtain what I needed by borrowing small sums of money from various individuals, rather than to seek further for any one person who might lend me the full amount. My success was phenomenal, and with loans ranging from one hundred to thirteen hundred dollars, I was soon able to draw a check for the full amount of the mortgage. Even then I might have had a fairly good bank account left if it had not been for the bills connected with the proceedings; I had to pay the prosecuting attorney as well as my own, their combined bills amounting to about two hundred and fifty dollars. This was certainly a great waste of money for the whole thing was so unjust and so un-

necessary; the mortgage had been amply protected by the actual value of the property, and I so much needed funds for extending the equipment of the Inn. On that July day after paying all the bills connected with the foreclosure there was just forty-seven cents standing to my credit at the bank, while the Fiftieth Anniversary of Vassar College was only four months away, and there was absolutely no prospects of earning an income until September.

In relating these various financial episodes I am not trying to cast the blame on anybody else, nor trying to defend myself, for most of the experiences were entirely impersonal being merely the result of an attempt to do business without sufficient capital; still there is no denying that some one else might have had the ability to handle these affairs with greater skill and so have avoided many of the calamities that I encountered. But it is only fair to state before leaving the subject that the confidence of most, if not all of my creditors has been regained, and there is not a merchant on Main Street who is not glad to receive an order from the Inn and to extend a reasonable term of credit for the same. When dreams come true and miracles too, it may be that I can pay the balance of the old indebtedness.





PORCH

XVI

THE INN CHANGES ITS NAME

For some years in consequence of the many vicissitudes related in the preceding chapters, the Inn was a sick sort of a place; the very building itself seemed to take on the melancholy that enveloped the owner, for it had necessarily been neglected in regard to paper and paint and varnish; even the employees had a hang-dog look due no doubt to the fact that they had stood by the place with such dog-like fidelity. But like an illness of the flesh that may be largely mental, the suffering was outgrown and forgotten in time. Peace and prosperity came again to reign and the festive atmosphere of old prevailed among the guests and the workers.

One thing that helped greatly to restore the Inn to a state of prosperity was giving it the name "The Wagner Inn." At first it was called simply "The Inn"; later we adopted the name "The College Inn," although from the beginning it has been universally alluded to by the press and by the people of Poughkeepsie, as the Vassar Inn, a name which still clings in spite of all attempts to fix upon it a title that is less exclusive in its significance. All these names indicated to the public mind that only college people or their friends would be welcome. "The Wagner Inn" was adopted with the idea of creating

a wider hospitality, its only possible implication being that all are invited to enter its ever open doors regardless of college affiliations. The result of this change was manifested in an ever increasing automobile trade, for as soon as the tourists recognized the Inn as a public hostelry they came many miles to enjoy its home like atmosphere.



XVII

HELP! HELP! HELP!

Sometimes when people have asked me, "Do you have any trouble in keeping your help?" I have felt like replying, "My greatest difficulty has been to get rid of them." It seems as if I had dismissed a hundred times more people than I ever engaged to do the work; this impression is no doubt due to the fact that it is much pleasanter to give a man a good job than it is to take it away from him. I have never been able to acquire the tact displayed by Miss Lapham in firing an unsatisfactory employee, although her method was most original and might well be emulated by any one who dreads such a disagreeable task. At least the following is her version, although the reader may do well to take it not only with a grain, but a whole pinch of salt. She would not tell a man that he was no good, that she wished he would vamose; she would proceed in this manner, "A fellow with your ability ought not to be satisfied with a position in a little place like this, you ought to go to New York and get a big job; here is your pay, go and see what you can do at the Hotel Knickerbocker." He would feel so pleased with himself by this flattery that he could not realize he was merely a victim of painless dentistry while his job was being withdrawn.

The most effective way of escape from the thralldom of many employees is to take a vacation yourself, a method which I have adopted from time to time with the best of results. It throws them on their own responsibility and gives you a new point of view when you return. This plan enables you to keep many faithful helpers who might otherwise be cut off by nerves that are on edge.

However there certainly is much truth in the statement that I have had but little difficulty in keeping my help, for most of the people who have worked at the Inn have become attached to the place; those who have thought to better themselves by going elsewhere, have almost invariably asked to come back. Many faithful ones who were at the Inn when I left for my vacation, came almost at the opening of its doors seventeen years ago.

It was in the earliest days that help was such a crying (in a literal sense) need. The business was scarcely heavy enough to warrant our engaging professionals, or specialists in different lines; our first cook was expected to do the laundry work, scrub the floor and wash dishes, besides preparing the meal orders. She was a rapid fire hand at the kitchen range, this Mrs. John Dough; she could broil a steak, bake a chocolate cake, and iron a table cloth all in the same breath; strange to say she took to drink and we had to let her go.

Sophocles was our first real chef and while he was a good cook he had unpardonable faults;

he exhibited strange emotions when he had to stop in the middle of a meal and go down cellar to pump water, and when there was an excessive number of meal orders he juggled with his knives in such a way that some of the help fled to the farthest ends of the house. He also had the habit of taking a day off now and then which was rather disconcerting to the boss, and so we said, Goodby Sophocles.

Then came the immaculate Clemence, a big blond who wept hysterically when the orders came in too fast. I can see him now standing stock still before the kitchen range, with great tears welling from some inexhaustible fountain. Fortunately he was stoutly upholstered in front so that the tear-drops did not fall any farther than his nice clean apron. Clemence was an artist in his work and he wanted time to do things well; his culture and efficiency would not permit of his moving too rapidly, even though the waiters were clamoring in vain for their orders. We decided that the right to shed tears belonged alone to the management of the Inn, a privilege certainly not to be usurped by the chef no matter how excellent a cook he might be, and so Clemence joined the line of exit.



XVIII

THE COLORED MAN A HERO AT THE RANGE

It was not until we tried the colored man in the kitchen that we found a chef who could be depended upon for calm endurance and regularity of hours as well as for his quality of cooking. Nothing short of a real hero can stand at a hot kitchen range for hours at a time, preparing order after order, no two alike, conscientiously doing his best, and maintain his equanimity regardless of inefficient helpers or impatient waiters. Such fortitude surely marks a man as a good soldier. Many a time the chef at the Inn has been at the range from early morning until late at night, scarcely taking time to eat anything himself; some days the orders have numbered eight or ten hundred people, an abnormally large business for the size of the place and its equipment.

Clifford, our first colored chef, proved to be a real prize; he was never too much overcome by the heat, nor too busy to smile and bow at the right time. But he graduated from the Inn in a few years, smiling and bowing himself into larger hotels with ever increasing pay, until now he has become famous in his line from New York to Florida.

Then came the formidable and very reverend

Mr. So-and-so; he would not have lost his dignity if burned at the stake. I doubt if we ever knew his first name, or called him by his last without using a handle, or even referred to him by the shorter cognomen of chef; it was always Mister this, or Mister that. Being an excellent cook, he too after an apprenticeship of a few years left for the larger opportunities that awaited him in the metropolis.

I use the word apprenticeship in referring to the time these men spent at the Inn, for while we did not exactly teach them how to cook, we kept them up to a uniform standard of excellence in their work, which was good training and put them on their mettle. After we discovered that a man knew how to cook nothing short of his best would satisfy us, so that the New York employment agencies claimed they could always secure a desirable position for any man who had cooked at the Inn for any length of time.

The next man of any note who went over the top with his broilers and kettles has worked at the Inn off and on, but mostly *on*, for eight or ten years, his off seasons representing winters in Florida and mid-summers in the mountains or at the seashore, the dull times at the Inn fortunately coinciding with the busy seasons of the summer resorts. While the Inn now remains open during the summer for the automobile trade, business is not so heavy as when College is in session, and after Christmas there is always a lack of festivities due partly to the weather but mostly to the mid-year exams and the opening

of a new semester's program. These alternating currents of prosperity at the Inn furnish the chef as well as some of the others with a variety of scenery and experience that lends inspiration to their work.

Between the advent and departure of the few famous chefs that I have mentioned in particular, numerous others have been tried, dismissed, and forgotten.

Our dining-room experiences in regard to the help were quite similar to those of the kitchen; the maids whom we tried at first as waitresses did not seem able to endure the fluctuating business; they were just as discontented with the ennui of a dull day as they were rebellious at the over crowding on a busy one. They were very particular about having their work specialized, and quite unwilling to take part in the general cleaning that had to be done between times. We also found that women were over sensitive, often taking a suggestion or criticism from the management as a mark of personal animosity.

In desperation we again turned to the colored man for a solution of the problem hoping at least to find those who were equipped with physical strength and endurance, for we had become thoroughly convinced that waiting on table was no work for women.

Then came George, the affable head-waiter, who was probably the most notable figure in the early history of the Inn. George was a past master in getting work out of the other boys; but when his usual good natured "persuadability"

failed to produce the desired results he was liable to assail his colored helpers with "You good for nothin' white trash you!" although some of them were as black as the ace of spades, this epithet always produced a quick response to orders.

During leisure hours George would start the boys to debating upon the most profound subjects, such as "Which does you like best, anticipation or *dissipation*?" It was usually two to one in favor of the latter for absolute pleasure. He had the genius of the southern darkey for coining words; imagine my surprise one morning when he asked me to order a dozen new *micas*-scopes; what kind of scientific investigations could he be planning for the waiters? I soon discovered that he wanted micas to be used under the candle shades to protect them from the flame. However, these modest contrivances are still listed at the Inn as micaroscopes for who would spoil such a delicious application of high sounding English? And no waiter was ever tolerated in the dining-room whom he suspected of being "unprincipled."

George seemed to be always on duty; it was never too early in the morning for him to welcome a visitor, and it was never too late at night for him to speed the parting guest with a genial "goodby, come again." He treated all alike with his winning smile and scraping bow, whether it was the timid freshman or the College president, the humble mother of a delinquent child, or the proud father of a youthful prodigy;

he had a way of anticipating one's wishes and his manner seemed to say, My one joy in life is to make you, you in particular, comfortable and happy.

At the present writing there are still two waiters at the Inn who came about the same time George arrived and who have taken charge of the work since his death, winning a marked degree of popularity for themselves. Girls may come and girls may go and so may the faculty, but this pair of faithful servitors stick to the Inn; like the stone pillars in front they seem to have become a part of the institution. Almost every girl who has ever accepted even a chocolate sundae from their hands, may be sure of a place in their infallible memory. A college student returning to her Alma Mater anticipating a cordial welcome to old scenes, may find that former friends have gone, there have been changes among the faculty, she feels herself forgotten, but let her merely set foot inside the doors of the Inn and she will perceive a ready recognition in the eyes of the colored boys who can pronounce her name on sight; here at last she feels at home and is not so unimportant after all. The boys might be able to divulge the secret of "improving your memory in one evening" according to "The amazing Experience of Victor Jones" as promulgated by the Independent Corporation in all the current magazines, but they will never "give it away" for this faculty is a part of their stock in trade.

Waiters are a very observing class of people

and show great discernment in regard to table manners, classifying their patrons accordingly. One of the colored boys was once heard to remark in regard to a guest, "I knows he's a gentleman by his BRAND of eating;" the gentleman turned out to be one of the College trustees. If you have leisure you may catch Bennie in a conversational mood and permit him to tell you some of his darkey stories such as the following, which seems to be a favorite. A congregation of colored people decided to give their pastor a fine Christmas present. They had heard him express the desire to reach the proud distinction of writing "D. D." after his name. A committee appointed to investigate the matter found that a college selling such a perquisite charged fifty dollars for this reverential degree. As the church had succeeded in raising only twenty-five dollars, the chairman recommended to the people that they present the beloved pastor with only one "D" this Christmas, reserving the other "D" for a future gift.

Thomas who comes and goes with the seasons must not be overlooked for he is the harbinger of spring with its busy days; he comes like the birds with a new coat and a song about Easter time and who can refuse him welcome? I go down stairs some fine morning and there he is. I know as soon as I see the whites of his eyes and his glistening teeth that spring has really arrived, and all I can say is "Hello, Thomas, you here already?" After the summer vacation he returns to help with the opening rush of Septem-

ber; but by that time his coat is rusty too like the birds, and becoming restless and discontented for some unaccountable reason he soon disappears; he goes south with his colleagues and the round is repeated. I have often wished that Thomas would settle down and stay at the Inn for I hold that his laugh alone is worth at least a dollar a day to any household. In regard to some of the help who were "called down" for being late, Tom was heard to remark "Der's sure one thing we does have fresh in dis here hotel every day, and dat's fresh excuses."



XIX

TWO COONS LOOK ALIKE TO ME

Tom and Jerry were two waiters sent to the Inn on trial by a New York employment agency. They looked so much alike to me that I could not see any mark of distinction even when they stood side by side except that one was a trifle shorter than the other. This seeing double made me nervous and I decided that one of them would have to go. As the name Tom seemed to bring a quicker response than Jerry I decided that the latter was the carbon copy and selected him as the victim for dismissal; accordingly I sent for him one morning to come to the office when I broke the news to him as gently as possible, telling him to get his things and return to the office for his money. In a few moments a colored man appeared whom I took for Jerry; I gave him his pay, expressed my regrets and said goodby. He had scarcely gone when the real Jerry entered and asked for his wages; what had I done? To my consternation I discovered that I had fired the wrong man, but Tom had not gone so far but that he could be recalled. He was not at all resentful concerning this "double dealing," and returned to work with the characteristic good nature he has shown in many years of intermittent service.

One new waiter who was over zealous in his

desire to please, spent an entire afternoon taking the paper covers off the lemonade straws just after a big bill had been paid for putting them on. He was in the class with the chamber maid who was discovered spending her leisure hours in un-wrapping the individual soaps. These acts were suggestive of such traits that neither of them stayed very long at the Inn.



XX

TELL YOU WHY

A man of all work whom for convenience I will call Peter deserves to be mentioned in this article for he had that wonderful faculty of being able to "tell why." I would say "Peter, don't you think it would be better to begin at the top of the stairs to sweep?" "Yes, ma'am, and I'll tell you why." Or "Peter, wouldn't it be a good plan to clean out the fire place before you start to dust?" "Sure, now and I'll tell you why," and he could tell why, he could preach a sermon on the subject, but the next time he would again begin at the bottom of the stairs. It was surprising how quickly Peter's mind responded to reason, but like many logicians he acted mechanically, reserving his logic for oratorical outbursts only, and still at that time in New York State, Peter could vote but I couldn't; I was merely the nonentity who paid the taxes. I sometimes wondered if even Peter could tell why.



XXI

WHEN THE SNOW IS GREEN

Dish washing at the Inn has always been a most troublesome problem; women it would seem ought to be especially well fitted for this work but they are not so constituted that they can wash dishes all day without getting nervous. I did not discover this until one busy day of constant serving when Annie broke into tears and wringing her hands exclaimed hysterically, "Thank God I have a home to go to where there aint no dishes." And Jennie asking for her pay one night declared that the snow would be green before she ever washed dishes again.

Women speak of this work usually not as dish-washing but "doing the dishes" thus indicating, perhaps unconsciously, that they are bent upon getting done sometime; but at the Inn where the service continues all day this happy result is seldom accomplished, so I found in the long run that it was better to have men wash the dishes; they were more willing to wash dishes by the hour or the day, just as they might dig a ditch that is endless. Although I often felt that men were too indifferent to the finishing of the task, they seemed better fortified nervously to endure the monotony of such toil.

In many hotels and private houses too, I have often noticed that the builders make the mistake

of placing the sinks against an inside wall. This only increases the monotony of an already deadly task. In planning for dish-washing I have found that it pays when possible, to see that the workers have access to one or more windows, for a view of the out doors, be it only a patch of blue sky, lightens almost any work. The reader may justly ask why we did not have a dish-washing machine; at one time our water supply and plumbing equipment did not seem to warrant that sort of apparatus, but a small machine has since been installed.



XXII

MISS LYNCH--A STAND-BY

In all work pertaining strictly to the functions of a good housekeeper, I found women invaluable; besides the bed-room work it needed the peculiar intelligence of women to superintend the store-room, the ice-boxes, and the general cleaning of the establishment. There is one woman who has been at the Inn since the first year of its opening and has become a first class Jack of all trades; I refer to Miss Katherine E. Lynch who began by helping us "week ends" with anything that needed to be done, and has gradually worked into a more regular and responsible position. It would be difficult to define her sphere for she is here, there, and everywhere, a modest, silent figure keeping mostly behind the scenes. She plans menus for dinner parties, helps to decorate the tables, and orders the best of everything for the cooks to prepare. On crowded busy days it is Miss Lynch who encourages the others, keeps them at their work, makes peace when there is danger of friction, and acts as a buffer between the employer and employees. She is altogether a very important factor in the management of the Inn for she knows all the ropes, from running the electric pump and jollying a disgruntled guest, to cashing up and paying off the help at the end of a busy day

Women were at their best where ever the work was varied in character, and proved themselves indispensable in the salad or serving rooms where the results to be attained were beyond mere drudgery. The making and serving of salads and sandwiches and fancy desserts afford every opportunity for ingenuity and artistic touches such as can be given only by a woman who loves her work. It would be difficult to find any one who could serve tempting dishes of breakfast fruits in such a hurry as Anna Suwarrow, or who could turn out hundreds of salads all at the same time, each one looking as if it alone had been the object of special attention.



XXIII

THE INN A TRAINING SCHOOL

One of the most gratifying features in conducting a business is to see the employees develop under your tutelage; it is surprising how quickly men and women respond to good treatment, how almost instinctively they assume responsibility in an atmosphere that is free from nagging. I have had people come to the Inn to work who seemed utterly transformed in their personality within a few weeks.

Any success that I may have had in handling my employees can be attributed to two rules that I have tried to maintain. First, I have always insisted upon peace among the workers at the Inn, who were expected to treat each other with the same courtesy they would show to an out-sider. No language was allowed that was not fit for the guests or the management to hear, and any dissenter was called upon to reform or leave. An outwardly apparent submission to these rules was not sufficient; more than once I have dismissed a man, not for the things he did, nor for the things he left undone, but on account of the things he thought; it was the spirit and not merely the letter of the law that had to be fulfilled.

The second resolve was especially important in securing skilled labor and in maintaining har-

mony; this was my motto "Never do anything yourself that you can hire done." On first thought it may seem to the reader that this was a manifestation of laziness, but I found that after I had detailed the work to different persons to perform they took more pleasure in it if they were given full responsibility. I tried never to interfere except in so far as it might be necessary to give important suggestions which would facilitate the method of doing the work, or to see if the results were satisfactory. I also found that when I tried to economize by doing any specific piece of work myself, some other line suffered from the lack of proper supervision, and it was wiser for me to stick to my own task of general manager.

I always encouraged any diversion among the employees that did not interfere with their duties; rainy days or dull intervals would often find a number of boys playing card or checkers, and at busy times one of the leaders perhaps would wisely start the boys to singing at their work. A dozen singing darkies could clean up the dining-room and wash the dishes in almost no time. Whether they sang according to rule or not the result was always harmonious and inspiring; it was like music to the soldiers. To the guests and the neighbors there was something mystically beautiful in this singing of the darkies at their work. It is one of those pleasant features of the life at the Inn that stand out clearly in my recollections to the exclusion of many sordid experiences that had to be met each day.

It was probably this privilege of self expression, which is after all the only true method of education and growth, that has attracted the employees to the Inn and held them there despite the lure of the city.



XXIV

HAS THE INN BEEN A SUCCESS?

In regard to the question, Has the Inn been a success, the answer depends entirely upon one's point of view and what one means by success. If reference is made to the financial situation as it stands today, I can truly say that the enterprise has been a paying investment. Besides having afforded me a generous living during the past sixteen years, the Inn is now comparatively free from debt, and I am drawing a fairly good income from the rent. Unless some unforeseen calamity happens the property should increase in value with the growth of the College and the City.

Considered as a training school for all kinds of people, the Inn has certainly been a success; this has already been shown in dwelling upon the help question, but the Inn has also been a place of education for any number of college girls; many young women who have had no home responsibilities in ordering meals, learn for the first time how a dainty luncheon or a course dinner should be served, and what menus are appropriate for different occasions. It is no exaggeration to say that a student expecting a distinguished guest might order the following combination--chicken soup, fried chicken, chicken salad, hot chocolate, chocolate sundae, and

chocolate cake, for young people seem to have an abnormal appetite for chicken and chocolate.

Many a time the management has saved a hostess and the guest of honor too, from embarrassment, by interfering with such a childlike display of taste, and substituting at the last moment a well balanced course dinner; frequently this has been done at the expense of the Inn; it was not always easy to offer an explanation or apology, even though the girls were usually grateful for helpful suggestions. On account of the reputation of the Inn as well as for the comfort of the patrons, the management always desired to present a tempting and satisfying meal. With apologies to the faculty it may be confessed that a very intellectual professor has sometimes been surprised that for dinner a porter-house steak has been served to her Yale or Harvard guest instead of the cream chicken she ordered in advance.



XXV

THE INN GIVEN TO OVERFEEDING

If by success one has reference to the reputation of the Inn and its standards of service as compared with other hotels, one has only to visit the place to become convinced of its popularity. Many people say the moment they step inside the front door they feel that the Inn has personality, its atmosphere of peace and refined simplicity is so apparent. This could not be said of it perhaps when crowded to its utmost capacity; only at times of over feeding has the Inn seemed to suffer from Inn-dyspepsia, and the pessimistical sensitiveness which usually accompanies that malady. Our feelings were very much hurt at the time of our first commencement, and several subsequent commencements also, for it took a number of years to learn how to plan for such preposterous crowds; we were roundly scored by hungry mobs for our inadequate quarters and for what seemed to them slow service. I well remember one morning when an irate parent accosted me in the dining-room with "Madam, I have waited an hour and a half for my breakfast"; but I "had one" on her when I replied "My dear lady, I can sympathize with you, I have waited two days for mine."

It is to be hoped that the patrons of the Inn

will not resent being alluded to as a mob; it might seem more respectful to mention the commencement or Field Day crowd as a seething vortex of humanity for such they seemed to those who were trying to supply their physical needs; the word mob however, is merely a scientific term used by psychologists when they wish to refer to a large number of people who all seem moved by the same instinct to act in a certain way at a given time, and it is in this sense that the epithet is here applied.

At one commencement time we hit upon the idea of advertising ready-to-serve dishes on the menu, a scheme which we thought would greatly facilitate the service. Alas! after the first day we never again had time to prepare them in advance; for nearly a week the mob clamored for the ready-to-serve while other choice viands went to waste in the larder. If you have any doubt about mob psychology and the power of suggestion, all you need do to become convinced of this potent influence is to visit the dining-room of the Inn during a busy time. One person orders a chicken salad, it is seen by a party at the next table who thinks it looks inviting and the order is repeated; again it is seen and the order duplicated over and over. Or it may be an innocent looking omelette or short-cake that leads the mob to such an onslaught in one line that the division of labor in the kitchen is entirely upset, some being rushed to death while others stand idle. A skillful head-waiter can

sometimes turn the tide of thought suggestion but not always.

In Scotland, a small town of South Dakota, a retired army officer owned the best hotel in the village; one busy Sunday the Colonel thought he would help in the dining-room by taking meat orders from the guests. He started out very affably with "Fried chicken and green peas, roast beef and cabbage?" "Fried chicken with peas" was the unhesitating answer of every guest; realizing suddenly that the dinner would not go round if they all persisted in such a similarity of taste, he ripped out a revolver and pointing it at a meek looking gentleman he said, "Damn you, you want corn-beef and cabbage." With gun in hand he had no further trouble in making corn-beef popular. Not being able to resort to the Colonel's methods, although we deeply sympathized with him, we had to adopt more tactful and less conspicuous ways of persuasion. But it can be readily understood why the Inn has settled down to a regular chicken, or turkey, dinner on Sundays, with no choice of any kind, the guests accepting what they are given.

The easiest crowds to serve during the *à la carte* service are those who know what they want and order it irrespective of others. Sometimes it seems as if it would be necessary to close the doors and bolt them to keep out those very considerate people who persist in ordering something easy like sandwiches, tea and toast, or boiled eggs. Such people are the most

difficult to serve and the hardest to suit, especially the tea-and-toast fiends. A group of women will come in with "Waiter, we are in a hurry, all we want is seventeen orders of tea and hot toast, bring the order at once. Now, have you ever tried to serve tea and toast to a crowd? Some want one kind of tea and some another; they want toast, dry, buttered, thin, thick, crisp. Do you know that it takes time and one's undivided attention to make toast, that it requires an artist rather than a chef to take a slice of bread and paint it with hot coals to a delicate brown? Do you know that by the time you have made the seventeenth pot of tea, the first may be like tannin? It finally became necessary to take toast off the menu, or mark the price so high that it was practically prohibitive to all but the dyspeptic who must have it. Eggs also had to come off the bill of fare on busy days, that is, the medium, hard, and soft boiled. If you have never tried to boil eggs for a hundred people at a time, take my advice and don't do it. The boiled egg fiend would not think of such a thing as ordering at his own risk; oh, no, if they are not just right, perhaps a trifle too hard or too soft, it is on the house to replace the order a dozen times if necessary until the desired consistency, or inconsistency, is obtained.

XXVI

WE LEARN HOW TO HANDLE THE CROWDS

It seemed to us in the beginning that criticisms at a crowded time were quite unjust; we had simply opened a little inn near the college for the purpose of catering to the students, with no thought of furnishing a guarantee that we could take care of any crowd that might descend upon us without warning as most of them did. It is difficult to plan without great waste when there is no way of knowing whether the number of patrons will reach a hundred or a thousand. But however we might excuse ourselves, we were not pardoned by an expectant and hungry public. The Inn was destined to grow in size, equipment, and skill, or else perish.

The Sunday night crowds we soon learned to handle and while there may be some complaints to-day by those who are not used to the short order service, and while an individual order may be overlooked now and then, there is scarcely a Sunday evening that less than two hundred girls are served in an hour and a half, no two ordering the same combinations of food.

But for the larger crowds that came for some special function at the College we had to make some vital changes in our plan of serving. By eliminating some things entirely from the menu,

and by a careful adjustment of prices, charging more for those things that were most difficult to prepare, the guests were surely but gently guided to a selection of foods that would facilitate the service; to charge twenty cents for toast and ten cents for rolls was taking time by the forelock and holding it fast to our own gait while several hundred people were hustled through an early breakfast.

The largest crowd that ever descended upon the Inn was at the time of the Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration in the fall of 1915. That event was the supreme test of endurance and adequate service. It proved that by thirteen years of experience the workers at the Inn had thoroughly mastered the subject of mob psychology. To my knowledge there was not one single person turned away from the dining-room doors although hundreds were demanding entrance, and there was not one complaint in regard to the service received. Not one employee dropped out of the ranks during that prolonged period of over-work, although many of them were on duty all day and far into the night, and so far as I know there was no word of irritation spoken anywhere within the walls of the Inn, by the guests, the employees, or the management, a record which it would be hard to duplicate in any other hotel. We are perfectly willing, however, to share the credit of this unparalleled success with our guests for being mostly former students of the College, they realized the unusual congestion and were most considerate and patient.



THE DINING ROOM

XXVII

HOLIDAYS AT THE INN

Nearly all the calendar days set aside for special celebrations find the Inn ready with suggestive ornamentation. The first date in the college year to demand attention is Hallowe'en which calls for a profusion of yellow bunting with Jack o'lanterns, death heads, and broomstick witches. Usually a hob-goblin dinner is prepared with a menu sufficiently wierd to satisfy the most superstitious of spook devotees. The following bill of fare printed in yellow and black is one of the most popular that has ever been offered at the Inn to the Saints of All Hallowes:

The Wagner Inn



Souvenir Menu

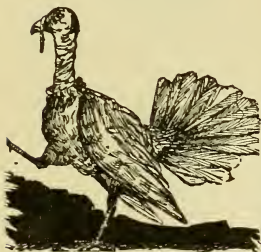
Hob-Goblin Dinner
Thursday Evening
October 31, 1912



Witches' Delight



Roasted
Hob-Goblins
Broom-stick Dressing
and
Fresh-Cob-webs



Ghost Salad



Skeleton Sandwiches



Assorted Spooks



Jack o' Lantern Pie



Devil's Food



Angel's Cream



Shades of Night



Music



Sweet Dreams



Thanksgiving offers the most satisfactory style of decoration with its fall fruits, vegetables and flowers. What could be more suggestive of abundance or more beautiful in coloring than a pyramid piled high with bright yellow pumpkins, green squash, yellow and red ears of corn with the husks turned back, bright red apples and luxurious bunches of grapes, while a profusion of chrysanthemums about the room sheds a glory over all! An effort is always made on this day in particular to create a home like atmosphere by having plenty of good things to eat, an accompaniment of music perhaps, or a special reminder of some of our blessings as embodied in the following verses which were used one year as a souvenir:

THANKSGIVING SONG

My heart, it sings and sings and sings,
I'm thankful for so many things.

Oh, I am thankful for the sky,
The blue's just right, I know not why;
If it were purple, red or green
Like gorgeous sunsets we have seen,
If all the day some rainbow hue
Bedecked the sky, it would be grue——some.

Oh, I am thankful for the sun;
I like the way the seasons run.
If autumn followed close the spring
And winter came upon the wing
Of summer in its awful heat,
To other worlds I'd long to beat——it.

Oh, I am thankful for the earth;
I'm proud of it, my place of birth.
If I'd been born on ruddy Mars
Or some of those far distance stars
That shine and twinkle all the night,
Through want of sleep, I'd grow unsight——ly.

Oh, I am thankful for the moon;
It shines at night instead of noon.
If all the nights were black as ink,
Could I get married, do you think
Without that golden orb above
To spoon his heart, my happy lov——er?

Oh, I am thankful that the rain
Rains down, not up, upon the grain.
If it rained up into the moon
We'd all dry up so very soon
We'd blow away into the air
And lose our friends and all our bear—ings.

Oh, I am thankful for the trees
When they are bare or crowned with leaves.
If they were weak and could not stand
In majesty sublime and grand,
I'd doubt God's making them for me
To share with other human be——ings.

And last, I'm thankful for my friends
Who've come to eat these odds and ends.
If strangers now, or all my foes
Had gathered here, why goodness knows
If we could eat that gobbler up
And spare me endless turkey sup——pers.

I'm thankful for so many things,
My heart, it sings and sings and sings.

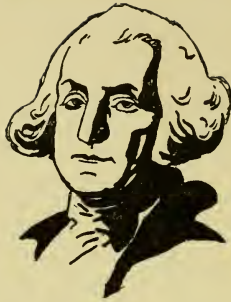
(M. S. W.)



As the college girls go home for Christmas the Inn begins early in December with its holiday suggestions; evergreens, holly, and poinsettias adorn the dining room and parlor, while a real Christmas tree with toys and tinsels and glinting lights enhances the holiday spirit. A Christmas sale is sometimes conducted in the sun-parlor exhibiting useful and attractive gifts for all, while cheery grate fires bring warmth to hands and hearts.

The most important events following the New Year are the birthdays of our two great presidents, Lincoln and Washington, but as these dates come so close together the celebration at the Inn usually takes place on the Friday or Saturday preceding the twenty-second of February. Red, white and blue bunting on pillars and walls with festoons of stars and stripes declare the patriotic devotion of college women, while a colonial dinner or reception affords plenty of entertainment especially when the colored waiters don appropriate dress suits and the white wigs of bygone days. The following invitation written by our cashier, Reita Lambert, was issued in 1913.





“The shade of George Washington solemn and
grand
Has announced his return from the far spirit
land.
On the eve of his birthday this most renowned
ghost
Accompanied by Martha will act as your host.

So in ruffles diaphanous, in powder and curls,
Please dress yourselves up like Colonial girls.
With song and with dance we'll try to be merry
To the tune of the hatchet that chopped down
the cherry.”

St. Valentine's Day is not to be overlooked
as it affords an especially good opportunity for
Cupid to remind these college women that they
are not to be slighted; he has chosen them for
his mark, and neither books nor wisdom can
furnish an impenetrable armor to his well aimed
shaft.

And thus throughout the college year the Inn endeavors to bring to the girls suggestions of those events which they have been in the habit of observing in the past, in other words we try to "Keep the Home Fires Burning" in their hearts and minds.



XXVIII

SUCCESS A COMPARATIVE TERM

The popularity of a place may speak for its success to a certain extent, but the fact that the Inn has survived all its vicissitudes proves its endurance, and few things continue to endure unless they are either beautiful, or necessary, or both. While the Inn has demonstrated its usefulness by affording employment and training for scores of people, by furnishing pleasure and comfort in ordinary times and providing necessities at crowded times, there is still room for many improvements, and where there is room for improvement, success cannot be spoken of as an absolute attainment. It is to be hoped that the Inn may claim an ever increasing degree of success by continuing its growth in size and equipment, and more especially in its perfection of service and in the extent of its hospitality.

At the present writing the little Inn seems threatened by various influences such as competition, high prices, and scarcity of labor; at one time such conditions might have thrown me into a panic which would have only precipitated disaster. From past experience I now know that I can dwell safely under the Shadow of His Wing. That the Inn has a real mission, that it will be protected by the college girls and

others who have learned to love it and its associations, and who feel that it presents a unique feature of College life, I fully believe. "But if not" then the Inn must be destined to function in some other way that will be equally useful and important. The success of the Inn remains unchallenged for the spirit of a place founded on faith and love and a desire to serve, is not to be daunted by any phase of commercialism.



XXIX

DO I ADVISE WOMEN TO GO INTO BUSINESS?

The most difficult question of all to answer is this, "Do you advise other women to go into business?" Was any one ever known to advise another to adopt the same occupation that he himself has followed? If one goes to a college professor for advice about entering the teaching profession he is sure to say "don't do it"; if a physician be consulted concerning his trade he will promptly reply, "Let the practice of medicine be the last thing you attempt"; while a merchant or business man will contend that a professional life offers the only hope of happiness on earth; the other fellow's occupation is always more alluring than one's own.

An individual enterprise, however, whether it be professional or commercial, offers certain advantages; it gives play to originality and initiative, increases a sense of responsibility, and is likely to result in a greater mental and spiritual development; it also insures a desirable degree of independence and security for no one person can "fire" the boss. But the boss may lose his business unless he systematically bosses himself and criticises his own policy and ability; he must make comparisons, even though they be odious, with a high standard of attainment.

By conducting one's own business it may be possible to avoid the pain of working under another who does not know how to manage his affairs as well as some of his employees *think* they could do it for him; it is quite human for a person to feel at times that he can give valuable pointers to those over him and it is often a matter of deep chagrin to find how little such suggestions are understood or appreciated; it is just this lack of an opportunity for self expression that drives many a man to launch a business of his own whether he be fitted for it or not.

But in spite of the advantages enumerated above that lend a subtle charm to a personal undertaking there are many hindrances to a woman's success, some of which seem to be purely inherent such as the over development of the economic instinct. Through the ages it has been woman's mission to conserve and utilize the spoils won by the man; he foraged and hunted while she prepared the game for her family and home; and in later years man earned the money while the thrifty wife managed the home and watched the savings. The modern woman who spends without thought is an abnormal product of an age given to luxurious living.

Because she is not used to taking chances, a woman in business may yield to the race instinct and be so occupied with petty savings that she will begrudge the outlay of funds that are absolutely necessary for the successful conduct of the business, or she may be so busy trying to

economize that she neglects to see opportunities for progress and improvement. To be a financial success one must learn to think not in terms of pennies or dimes, but in hundreds and thousands, for as a man thinks so will it be. The peanut vender on the corner selling his wares for five cents a bag cannot become the wholesale dealer until he can think and act in thousands.

My experiences with women have also proved that they are chary about entering into any employment that is binding for a great length of time, this attitude being due I suppose to the marrying instinct, consequently a business proposition does not appeal to the average woman. Being an old maid myself I am not sure that such precaution is not a mark of wisdom, especially until the old idea that a married woman must not work for money has been entirely eradicated from our social system. However, women who now seek positions are not nearly so apologetic as they used to be. I well remember one conversation that took place quite early in the history of the Inn. The gist of it is as follows:

Applicant—I want you to understand that I am a perfect lady, I am not a working woman, I have always been taken care of (sheds tears).

M. S. W.—Then why do you come here to ask for work?

Applicant—Because I am in need of money.

M. S. W.—How can you expect a position if you have never done any work?

Applicant—Oh, I have done house work.

M. S. W.—Anything else?

Applicant—Oh, yes, I used to keep my husband's books.

M. S. W.—Anything else?

Applicant—Sometimes I have earned a little money sewing for my friends.

M. S. W.—Now we are getting along, what else can you do?

Applicant—Once I nursed an old gentleman who was sick.

M. S. W.—It seems to me you ought to have the honor of being called a working woman; when you can speak of all these things you have done, with pride instead of apologies, then you may hope to obtain a good position.

This was an entirely new idea to Mrs. applicant who had not realized the absurdity of apologizing to a working woman for wanting to work. This sort of self commiseration, I am thankful to say, is fast disappearing; no doubt the war is doing more than anything else to promote democracy among women, encouraging freedom in the choice of an occupation without fear of public opinion.

I should certainly hesitate to advise women in general to go into business; it seems to me that it depends entirely upon the character of the individual who may be considering the subject; if she has enough faith in her enterprise so that her vision is not impaired by stinting her investment, if she can sleep in the linen-closet when necessary, if she can endure social

ostracism and the loss of friends when public opinion is against her, if she can almost lose out and start again with only forty-seven cents to her credit, if she can experience all these things without bitterness, then I would say Yes in answer to the question. But if her plan is merely a money making scheme devoid of ideals, if her respect for her work does not fortify her against all social and intellectual snobbishness, if she is lacking in faith or endurance, then I should say that such a woman is not fitted to establish anything original in the business world. Unless a woman has the spirit of the pioneer she should not attempt anything beyond the conservative occupations that lend prestige and afford an opportunity to earn a good salary.



XXX

FAITH A MIRACLE WORKER

This book has been written with the object of showing how much can be accomplished in spite of material limitations if one has a vision of things to come, and can pursue the vision with faith, determination, and self-sacrifice.

A work that is entered into merely as a make-shift for earning a living can offer no guarantee of success, while a worthy motive such as "filling a long felt want" seems to invite divine protection; the feeling that the work is important demands respect from yourself and others; respect begets faith, and faith insures materialization. Having been led by some vision on a path of endeavor, do not give up, not even at the eleventh hour, nor the twenty-third hour, nor the twenty-third hour and fifty-ninth minute of the day of foreclosure; for help will surely come according to your prayers and your faith.

To one who has survived some experience through which he has fought and bled, the following questions are likely to present themselves: could my talents have been used to better advantage in promoting some greater work? have I availed myself of the largeness of life offered by the undertaking? has it opened a vision of still greater things to come?

It is rather futile to look back upon one's past and express regret, for no matter how sordid it may seem, one never knows what the alternative might have been; one can never say with any degree of certainty, If I had not done thus and so, I should have done so and so. No doubt we all feel at times that we might have risen to the height of an Abraham Lincoln or a Florence Nightingale if fate had not bound us to earth with irresistible ties of family, class prejudice, and mortal fear. It is the immortal within that speaks to us of such possibilities and convinces us that our life here is merely a training school for greater attainments when we shall have overcome these limiting influences in our development.

It is true that certain events may bring out unexpected heroic qualities in almost any one, but the best that most of us can do is to look after the small things in a big way, so that we may not submit ourselves to the danger of being absorbed by them, but be prepared for the larger thing when it does come. Only by recognizing the divine urge within, only by keeping our eyes on a vision of the eternal, can we hope for courage to follow the path of original effort, and so present at the end a life that is not entirely shorn of INDIVIDUALITY—the greatest gift of God to man.



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